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LONDON FOR GOLDRICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON MIDDLE EAST

Summary

-- Lead story in all papers today, August 24, continues to highlight developments in ongoing investigations of the attack on Aqaba. Papers also continue to highlight issues related to the Iraqi constitution.

-- "More dangerous than terrorism itself"

Daily columnist and former Minister of Information Saleh Qallab writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (08/24): "The position adopted by the Islamic Action Front vis--vis the Aqaba crime, acquitting the terrorists of any responsibility ... and instead blaming the Americans and the Jordanian government, suggests that a review of the position of political Islam organizations and forces towards terrorist operations in general must be conducted.... Now that the issue is clear and it has been proven that the terrorists have actually slaughtered the image of Islam and distorted it, words like 'but' have no place, and holding Israel, the West, the United States, and 'unwise' governments responsible instead of the real culprit has become as good as taking part in the crime itself.... It is no longer acceptable that the position of political Islam forces be reflected in the portrayal of the crime of targeting a country as an individualistic crime while, at the same time, they continue to avoid condemning terrorism and continue to hold the traditional enemies, the United States and Israel, responsible. This is a clear political ploy and it is no longer possible to make people, like Jordanians, believe in it."

-- "The withdrawal from Gaza"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back-page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (08/24): It is not yet clear who is the winner and who is the loser from the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the pullout of Jewish settlers. Sharon considers himself the winner because he achieved the plan that he talked about and worked on for the past two years. The Palestinian Authority considers itself the winner because the withdrawal from Gaza constitutes the beginning of a movement that cannot be stopped and will, sooner or later, include the West Bank. Hamas considers itself the winner because the withdrawal took place as a result of the Palestinian resistance and not because of negotiations. America considers itself the winner and wants to claim responsibility for this step that paves the way for a peaceful solution.... What determines whether the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza constitutes a victory or defeat for one party or another will depend on what happens after the withdrawal. If Palestinian internal fighting over the authority breaks out, then Sharon would be the winner. But if the Palestinians prove their worthiness of independence, then it would be a victory for them. If America exercises more pressure on Israel leading to more withdrawals and pullouts, then America would be the winner, and if the Palestinian Authority fails to control Gaza from the security and political aspect, then Hamas would be the winner."

-- "The dividing line"

Chief Editor Ayman Safadi writes on the back-page of independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/24): "There is a difference between justifying these [terrorist] crimes and the attempt to explain and analyze them, but the dividing line between justifications and explanations is very thin, and crossing it constitutes indirect support for those who kill the innocent in all parts of the world, Jordan included. It is time to develop a clear religious, philosophical, political, and humanitarian stand that condemns Al-Qaeda and its

affiliates and all its actions and ideologies without attempting to justify them or link their actions with Arab and Muslim causes. No doubt, policies adopted by the United States in the region were responsible for the suffering, the injustice, and the occupation in more than one Arab country, and no two can argue about Israel's responsibility for the tension borne from its illegal occupation of Palestine and other Arab lands. But Al-Qaeda is not serving legitimate Arab interests in Palestine, Iraq and elsewhere, and any attempt to link Al-Qaeda actions with just causes would only bring harm to these causes and serve the terrorists who take pride in killing a Jordanian soldier."

-- "The programmed destruction of Iraq"

Daily columnist Rakan Majali writes on the back-page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (08/24): "It is no longer a secret for the Iraqis that the United States is doing everything it can to tear Iraq apart while, at the same time, it continues to hold on to a loose framework of contradictions and struggles within that create an internal Iraqi formula that, in the final analysis, makes the breakout of a civil war in Iraq unavoidable should the American forces pull out.. Some people believed that the destruction was related to the military operations that took place at the time of Iraq's occupation, but today it becomes clear that this destruction is a programmed strategy within a hatred-filled military, political, economic, cultural, and psychological war designed to destroy Iraq with the aim of controlling it and making it a model and lesson for others."

-- "Iraq's fires are not an internal issue"

Chief Editor Taher Udwan writes on the back-page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (08/24): "There is a fire raging in Iraq and it is continuously growing. It would be a mistake to give in to the idea that this country is the sole concern of the United States or the responsibility of the Green Zone government in Baghdad. What is happening in this brotherly country constitutes a disengagement process for the state and the society.. Let us stop promoting or supporting the so-called political process in Iraq. This process is not going to lead to security, stability, or peace. It is just a scenario on which President Bush and the neo-conservatives are insisting in order to create a military and political entity based on sectarian and tribal militias with the aim of continuing the war on behalf of the Americans.. The Iraqi situation is no longer the sole concern of Bush and Blair or even Ja'fari. It is a regional issue and a blazing fire that threatens to consume the entire region."

HENZEL